



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
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News Release

24 INDICTED IN KOREAN HUMAN SMUGGLING SCHEME THAT BROUGHT PROSTITUTES INTO THE UNITED STATES

Brothel owners face expanded charges for financial violations, including money laundering

LOS ANGELES – A federal grand jury handed down indictments today charging 24 persons for their role in a sophisticated human smuggling scheme that allegedly brought hundreds of South Korean women into the United States to work as prostitutes.

Named in the two multi-count indictments issued today are 23 individuals originally charged in the investigation and a 24th suspect who was identified following the take down of the case June 30. That individual, Mi Ae Kim, a.k.a. Ae-Kyeong Kim, age 48, allegedly owned and operated a brothel known as the 7th Spa.

During last month's enforcement operation, federal agents arrested 18 of the suspects. A 19th defendant, Hye Sun Sin, a.k.a. "Pink", was taken into custody earlier this week. The 26-year-old was arrested by ICE agents at an apartment on Rossmore Avenue in Los Angeles Tuesday. The indictment alleges Sin operated two Internet sites, including one known as asianbedgirl.com, that offered call girl services using undocumented Korean women as prostitutes. Five of the 24 defendants remain at large and are being sought by federal authorities.

The indictments issued today charge the suspects with conspiracy. The three objects of the conspiracy are – importation of aliens to the United States for prostitution; transporting illegal aliens; and harboring and concealing illegal aliens. In addition, the indictment includes new charges against several of the brothel operators for money laundering and illegal monetary transactions.

Today's indictments stem from a lengthy investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Division, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The investigation focused on a criminal network dubbed the Jung Organization that allegedly smuggled South Korean women into the United States and then provided the women to brothel operators.

The brothels were concealed behind businesses that purported to be massage parlors and “out-call service” operations. The prostitutes were allegedly managed by an underground network of Korean “taxi” services operated by members and associates of the Jung Organization. The “taxi” services coordinated the prostitutes’ daily schedules and worked hand-in-hand with the brothel operators.

Affidavits filed in the case allege that the organization’s ringleaders, Young Joon Jung and Ho Kyung Kim, oversaw efforts to recruit prospective prostitutes in South Korea and then arranged for them to be brought to the United States. Some of the women were smuggled into the country across the Mexican and Canadian borders. Others traveled to the United States on fraudulently obtained visitors’ visas.

The women allegedly paid up to \$16,000 each to be smuggled into the country. Once they arrived, the women were expected to work as prostitutes, with a portion of their earnings going to repay their smuggling debts. As part of the scheme, some of the women were allegedly transported to Northern California, Colorado, and Texas to work as prostitutes.

During last month’s enforcement operation, ICE took 46 undocumented Korean women into custody who were working at brothels. The women have all been designated as material witnesses and will remain in the United States until the prosecution of the case is completed.

The search warrants executed by federal agents last month in connection with the case targeted 28 locations across the greater Los Angeles area. The sites included suspected brothels and so-called human smuggling “drop houses.” The brothels themselves were housed in a variety of businesses, including chiropractic offices, acupuncture clinics, spas, and massage parlors. So far, authorities have seized more than \$1.8 million in the investigation, including cash and checks recovered at the businesses and residences, as well as bank accounts.

The Los Angeles investigation is linked to an ongoing probe in San Francisco in which 29 people have been indicted. The charges in the San Francisco case include, bringing in and harboring aliens; money laundering conspiracy; conspiracy to transport female Korean nationals across state lines with intent to engage in prostitution; and conspiracy to use interstate communications by phone to engage in unlawful activity. Two of the defendants in San Francisco have also been charged with sex trafficking for knowingly using force, fraud or coercion to cause two women to engage in a commercial sex act.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.